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Claims

[c1] An automotive door trim assembly, comprising:
an interior door trim panel adapted to be secured to an automobile door;
an access opening formed in said door trim panel and sized to facilitate the installation and servicing of door accessories within the interior of the automobile door;
a plurality of first connecting members disposed on said door trim panel, proximate said access opening;
an access panel slidably coupled to said door trim panel, proximate said access opening, for movement between a first position wherein said access panel is removable from said door trim panel to expose said access opening, and a second position wherein said access panel is secured to said door trim panel and covers said access opening; and
a plurality of second connecting members disposed on said access panel, said second connecting members slidably engaging said first connecting members when said access panel is moved in a direction parallel to a surface of said door trim panel to thereby retain said access panel on said door trim panel.

[c2] The door trim assembly of claim 1, wherein said first connecting members are integrally formed with said door trim panel.

[c3] The door trim assembly of claim 1, wherein said second connecting members are integrally formed with said access panel.

[c4] The door trim assembly of claim 1, wherein said first and second connecting members comprise respective interlocking portions that cooperate to positively lock said access panel in said second position.

[c5] The door trim assembly of claim 4, wherein said interlocking portions include detents formed on one of said first and second connecting members.

[c6] The door trim assembly of claim 1, further comprising a sealing member disposed between said door trim panel and said access panel, proximate said access opening.

[c7] The door trim assembly of claim 6, wherein said sealing member is carried on said access panel.

[c8] The door trim assembly of claim 6, wherein said sealing member is carried on said door trim panel.

[c9] The door trim assembly of claim 1, further comprising an armrest supported on said access panel.

[c10] The door trim assembly of claim 1, wherein said access panel further comprises:
a peripheral edge circumscribing said access panel; and
a flange extending outwardly from said access panel, proximate at least a portion of said peripheral edge.

[c11] The door trim assembly of claim 10, further comprising:
a second connecting member formed on said flange.

[c12] An automotive door assembly, comprising:
a door frame adapted to be hingedly mounted to an automobile;
an exterior door panel coupled to said door frame; and
an interior door trim assembly coupled to said door frame, generally opposite said exterior door panel, and comprising:
an interior door trim panel,
an access opening formed in said door trim panel and sized to facilitate the installation and servicing of door accessories within the interior of the automotive door assembly,
a plurality of first connecting members disposed on said door trim panel, proximate said access opening,
an access panel slidably coupled to said door trim panel, proximate said access opening, for movement between a first position wherein said access panel is removable

from said door trim panel to expose said access opening, and a second position wherein said access panel is secured to said door trim panel and covers said access opening, and

a plurality of second connecting members disposed on said access panel, said second connecting members slidably engaging said first connecting members when said access panel is moved in a direction parallel to a surface of said door trim panel to thereby retain said access panel on said door trim panel.

[c13] A method of securing an access panel proximate an opening in an interior door trim panel, comprising:

positioning the access panel proximate the opening;

sliding the access panel relative to the door trim panel, generally along a direction parallel to a planar surface of the door trim panel; and

engaging connectors on the access panel with corresponding connectors on the door trim panel while sliding the access panel relative to the door trim panel.

[c14] The method of claim 13, further comprising:

sliding the access panel relative to the door trim panel to disengage the connectors on the access panel from the connectors on the door trim panel; and

moving the access panel relative to the door trim panel to expose the opening in the door trim panel.